

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claim Objections - The claims have been amended to insure singular use of the term "claim" in describing antecedent dependency. Main independent method claim 26 (formerly claim 14) now sets forth positive method steps.

It is believed that the claim objections are overcome.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §112 - Claims 8 and 12 have been revised and claims 23 and 25 added to state a broad range of tapering angles in claims 8 and 12 and a lesser, included range of tapering angles in claims 23 and 25. It is believed that these features of the present invention are now properly described in the claims and it is respectfully requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112(2) be withdrawn.

Allowed/Allowable Claims - The allowability of claims 7, 20, and 21 is noted and appreciated. By the present amendment, the other claims in the application have been amended in a manner deemed to render them similarly allowable.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102 - In the Office Action, independent apparatus claim 1 and certain claims dependent thereon were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 on U.S. Patent 4,886,528 to Aaltonen et al. In the rejection, the Examiner noted elements 5 and 6 (measuring sensors), element 8 (vacuum pump) and passage 10.

By the present amendment, independent apparatus claim 1, as well as independent apparatus claim 10, have been canceled and claims 22 and 24 substituted in their stead to improve the form of the claims and description of the invention found therein.

In newly submitted claim 22, the increase in the output passage cross sectional area is described occurring in a region along the passages in the liquid separator and lying between the ends of the passages. This is a cross sectional area alteration that is internal to the liquid separator and clearly distinguishes the claimed subject matter over any teaching or

suggestion of the '528 patent in which any changes in the output passage are external to the liquid separator.

Claim 22 is thus deemed to define patentable subject matter and to be allowable.

Claim 24 that replaces canceled claim 10 and contains a detailed description of the input passage has been amended in a similar manner.

The rejected claims depending from claim 22 are believed allowable for the same reasons as main independent claim 22 as well as for the detailed subject matter recited therein.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103 - Claims 3, 4, 17, and 18 dependent directly or indirectly on examined claim 1, now claim 22, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 on the aforesaid '528 patent with the addition of U.S. Patent 6,155,097 to Arnold.

With respect to claims 3, 4, 17, and 18, the shortcomings of the '528 patent with respect to the subject matter of main independent claim 22 have been noted above. The Arnold reference is not believed to overcome these shortcomings. Further, lines 14 and 15 of claim 22 note that the cross sectional area of the output passage increases in a tapered manner along the flow direction. No such construction is found in the structure of the Arnold reference, including the portions by the Examiner in the Office Action.

As noted above, claim 10 has been canceled and claim 24 substituted in its stead. Claim 24 is analogous to claim 22 but includes a detailed description of the input passage whereas claim 22 contains a detailed description of the outlet passage. The input passage described in claim 24 is clearly different than the input passage 12, 17, 13 shown in the '528 patent. The same is true with respect to the disclosure of the '097 patent to Arnold.

Claim 24 is thus deemed to define patentable subject matter and to be allowable. Claims 11 and 13 dependent on claim 24, and also rejected on the '528 and '097 references, are similarly believed to be allowable.


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References of Interest - The references cited as being of interest have been reviewed and are not believed to alter the patentability of the claimed subject matter urged above.

Conclusion - Claims 2-9, 11-13, and 15-26 are deemed to define subject matter patentable over the applied references. Withdrawal of the rejection and passage of this application to allowance with the above noted claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

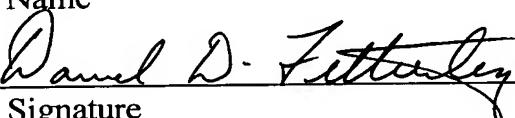
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